7: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953)1957 SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

tional subsistence activities, it placed severe inhibitions upon the extensive sorties formerly customary.

Warfare did not end until about 1912, over a century after the Mundurucú had made peace with the whites. During this time certain internal modifications had occurred in the social structure, but social cohesion had remained intact and the boundaries of the society were still sharply defined and vigorously maintained. Although members were lost to Brazilian society, a hard core of population living near the upper Tapajós River made war upon other Indian groups with energy and success. This was not "aboriginal" warfare; it was frequently waged on behalf of the whites and with firearms supplied by them. But the only information on Mundurucú warfare of any value pertains to the 19th century and was derived from older informants and published sources. This, then, is the proper time dimension of our study, and we turn now to a consideration of the relevant aspects of Mundurucú culture during this period.

The Mundurucú villages were located in the midst of grass-covered savannahs surrounded by dense forest, but their subsistence economy was essentially the same as other groups of the Amazon rain forest. Hunting was important throughout the year, and fishing was primarily a dry season activity. Garden crops included the usual range of Tropical Forest vegetables and fruits, and bitter manioc was the staple product. Manioc flour, known as *farinha* in Brazil, was also traded to the whites by the Mundurucú and constituted their most important commercial commodity in the period prior to the rubber boom.

The division of labor and the organization of work reflected certain basic aspects of Mundurucú social structure. The men hunted and fished and carried out the strenuous task of garden clearing, while the women did the rest of the horticultural work and tended the households. Residence was matrilocal, and the females of each house formed a nucleus of matrilineally related kinswomen; each such household was also a communal work and consumption unit. Each Mundurucú village had about three to five such houses and a men's house; the latter was the locus of male activity, for all the village men slept, ate, worked, and relaxed within its confines.

The membership of the men's house was eclectic in relation to descent. The Mundurucú were divided into more than forty patrilineal clans, linked by loose and unnamed phratric affiliations, and parcelled almost equally between patrilineal, exogamous moieties. But the matrilocal residence rule and the resultant shift of men from their natal households and, commonly, villages continually blocked the formation of co-resident descent groups.

Despite the diversity of their local and lineal origins, the men of a village, and ultimately of the whole tribe, were expected to maintain harmonious and cooperative relations. Cooperation in economic activities transcended the minimal necessities of their ecological adaptation, and any open show of aggression between men was strictly prohibited. The men's house provided the organizational framework within which this unity was expressed, while male

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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ever, the people of the village still maintain trade relations and their closest social contacts with the Cururú River settlements.

The other five communities are those which before the migration to the Cururú were farthest removed from its shores. A glance at the map will show that communication by water with the dwellers of that river is not feasible, and a two or three days' march would be necessary by land. Thus, geographical removal has combined with the social gulf that has arisen between campineiros and Cururú residents to make contact between the two groups most sporadic.

THE SAVANNAH VILLAGES

Most of the research in the savannahs was done in the village of Cabruá. The choice was made primarily for physiological and nonscholarly reasons; it had the least insects and the most food of all the villages. A vacant house was also available and ready to be occupied. Beyond considerations of creature comfort, Cabruá was suitable because it had the second largest population, several excellent old informants in residence, and it was a typical community of the more traditional type. Its five houses were arranged in the customary circle around a central plaza, and its male population lived in the traditional men's house. My wife and I accordingly settled in Cabruá during the second half of our Mundurucú sojourn.

The Mundurucú are essentially forest dwellers. Although their villages are on high savannahs, they depend on the resources of the forests and rivers for their subsistence. Their ecological adaptation does not differ greatly from that of other tropical forest tribes except in varying emphasis on different pursuits. Hunting, fishing, gathering, and gardening were and still are the basis of Mun-

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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durucú subsistence. Trade is for Western manufactured goods only; all food is obtained from the immediate environment.

The village is the basic unit of social interaction and cooperation among the Mundurucú. Strong ties exist between the residents of each community, and all feel themselves to be members of the tribe as a whole; there are no linguistic or cultural differences between any of the savannah villages, and feelings of localism are but weakly developed. But despite the fundamentally pan-tribal identification made by the people, the local community is the essential framework in which their daily existence is passed, and it is the largest social unit with a continuing political organization. Each village is autonomous within terms of the subsistence economy, and its membership constitutes the significant group engaged in production and distribution.

HUNTING

Of the four principal subsistence-seeking activities, hunting and horticulture contribute more to the food supply than fishing and gathering, except during the dry season when residence shifts to the river banks. To the Mundurucú man of the savannahs, the proper daily activity is the hunt. The men are tireless and enthusiastic hunters and prize game more than any other food. Hunting, in aboriginal times, was done exclusively with bows and arrows and simple traps. Many, but by no means most, men now have firearms, usually muzzle-loading shotguns. The principal animals hunted are tapir (*Tapirus americanus*), wild pig (*Tayassu albirostris*), catitú (*Tayassu tajassu*), several species of deer, *paca* (*Cuniculus paca Acs.*), monkeys, and birds. Wild pig is the most abundant source of game food in the Tapajós region. Although the men enjoy

/4 cont./

114 Tocantins appears to have provided some additional materials on Mundurukú agriculture. But his work is not available to me at the moment.

*24] The Handbook of South American Indians summarizes the subject
[22] in these few lines: "The Mundurukú subsist partly on horticulture and partly on hunting, fishing and gathering. Tocantins' (1877) list of plants cultivated by them includes two species of manioc, sweet potato, pineapple, sugar cane, various peppers and beans, and several species of bananas. Other authors mention cotton, tobacco and genipa. Tocantins names some 30 noncultivated plants utilized in Mundurucu economy." (6)

6. Horton, 1948: 273.

*24] And this is all, more or less, that is known of these Indians'
12] agriculture. The present article, therefore, attempts to amplify
[17] this knowledge, although the author is well aware that in many respects, and especially regarding garden methods, the Mundurukú system does not differ materially from that of other tribes in the region, or in the Amazon basin in general. /5/ Practical experience in the matter teaches us that agriculture among the Indians of the Amazon forest allows for slight variations, but not for basic differences.

II. Garden methods

If we regard the agriculture of the Mundurukú Indians as a culture complex, we can easily single out two distinct elements. One is the purely material, manual, or technical element, which will be discussed here. The other is made up of various social factors which render agriculture not a lifeless task or factor, lacking all influence, not an isolated complex within the tribe, but something vitally integrated into tribal life, something upon which the well-being of the community and of the family now depend. In this sense,
[182] agriculture itself becomes a social element in native life. (7)